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Tuna Newsletter

National Marine Fisheries Service
- Southwest Region
- Southwest Fisheries Science Center

May 1997 Issue 125

U.S. TUNA STATISTICS

Editor's note: The following articles were prepared by NMFS personnel from data and information gathered from sources in the U.S. tuna industry and government.

U.S. CANNED TUNA INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS, THIRD AND FOURTH QUARTERS 1996

Total receipts of tuna by U.S. canners during the third quarter of 1996 (July-September) increased by 24% to the equivalent of 142,300 short

IN THIS ISSUE

- U.S. Canned Tuna Industry Highlights, Third and Fourth Quarters 1996.....1
- U.S. Tuna Fisheries Update.....3
- Southwest Fisheries Science Center's Billfish Tagging Program.....5
- Recent Developments in Tuna Fisheries: News from Around the World 7

Table 1. Total U.S. cannery receipts (st) by species for the third quarters of 1995 and 1996. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Jul-Sep	Type	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
1995	ROUND	22,800	52,300	17,400	92,500
	GILLED & GUTTED	*	0	300	300
	LOIN	0	7,100	2,700	9,800
	TOTAL (as received)	22,800	59,500	20,400	102,600
	TOTAL (round weight)[2]	22,800	68,400	23,700	114,900
1996	ROUND	32,800	62,400	18,500	113,700
	GILLED & GUTTED	*	0	500	500
	LOIN	200	8,600	3,700	12,500
	TOTAL (as received)	33,000	71,000	22,700	126,700
	TOTAL (round weight)[2]	33,200	81,800	27,400	142,300

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.
[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.
[2]Converted to round weight by using factors of 1.11 for gilled-and-gutted and 2.25 for loins.

Table 2. Total U.S. cannery receipts (st) by species for the fourth quarters of 1995 and 1996. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Oct-Dec	Type	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
1995	ROUND	29,600	44,700	19,700	93,900
	GILLED & GUTTED	0	*	200	200
	LOIN	0	8,900	1,300	10,200
	TOTAL (as received)	29,600	53,600	21,200	104,400
	TOTAL (round weight)[2]	29,600	64,700	22,900	117,200
1996	ROUND	30,800	38,900	18,200	88,000
	GILLED & GUTTED	*	*	100	100
	LOIN	1,300	7,100	5,000	13,400
	TOTAL (as received)	32,100	46,000	23,400	101,400
	TOTAL (round weight)[2]	33,700	54,800	29,600	118,200

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.
[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.
[2]Converted to round weight by using factors of 1.11 for gilled-and-gutted and 2.25 for loins.

tons (st) of whole fish (round weight), compared to the third quarter of 1995 (Table 1). The principal species received was skipjack tuna with 57% of the total, followed by albacore and yellowfin tuna with 23% and 19% of the total, respectively. Total receipts during the fourth quarter of 1996 (October-December) increased by 1% to the equivalent of 118,200 st of whole fish, compared to the fourth quarter of 1995 (Table 2). The principal species received was skipjack tuna with 46% of the total, followed by albacore and yellowfin tuna with 29% and 25% of the total, respectively.

Receipts of tuna by U.S. canners for all four quarters of 1996 totaled 473,700 st, up 1% from the previous year (Table 3). Yellowfin tuna and albacore receipts were up by 32% and 9%, respectively, while skipjack tuna receipts were down by 11%.

Although the vast majority of tuna received by U.S. canners is whole fish, some quantity is received as loins or gilled-and-gutted. Receipts of tuna loins were up by 28% for the third quarter of 1996 and up by 31% for the fourth quarter. Receipts of loins for all four quarters were up by 17%. (Loins and gilled-and-gutted receipts are converted to round weight receipts by factors of 2.25 and 1.11, respectively. For this article, unconverted receipts are used unless otherwise stated.)

Domestic deliveries to U.S. canners for the third quarter of 1996 increased by 49%, and imported deliveries increased by 4% (Table 4). Skipjack tuna was easily the largest component of all domestic deliveries at 47,600 st, and total domestic deliveries outpaced imports by 6,700 st. For the fourth quarter of 1996 domestic deliveries decreased by 17%, and imported deliveries increased by 14% (Table 5). Skipjack tuna continued to be the largest component of all domestic deliveries at 28,400 st, and total imports led domestic deliveries by 6,600 st.

Table 3. Total U.S. cannery receipts (st) by species for 1995 and 1996. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Jan-Dec	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
1995	ROUND	106,100	210,500	63,200	379,800
	GILLED & GUTTED	*	*	1,000	1,000
	LOIN	*	32,400	6,800	39,200
	TOTAL (as received)	106,200	242,900	71,000	420,000
	TOTAL (round weight)[2]	106,200	283,400	79,600	469,200
1996	ROUND	112,000	187,400	70,100	369,500
	GILLED & GUTTED	100	*	1,200	1,200
	LOIN	1,500	29,200	15,100	45,700
	TOTAL (as received)	113,500	216,500	86,400	416,400
	TOTAL (round weight)[2]	115,400	253,000	105,400	473,700

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

[2]Converted to round weight by using factors of 1.11 for gilled-and-gutted and 2.25 for loins.

Table 4. U.S. cannery receipts (st) of domestic and imported tuna by species for the third quarters of 1995, 1996 and the recent (1991-95) third quarter averages. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Jul-Sep	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
		TOTAL CANNERY RECEIPTS (ALL LOCATIONS)			
1995	DOMESTIC	3,900	28,900	12,100	44,900
	IMPORTED	18,900	30,600	8,200	57,700
	TOTAL	22,800	59,500	20,400	102,600
1996	DOMESTIC	7,700	47,600	11,400	66,700
	IMPORTED	25,300	23,500	11,200	60,000
	TOTAL	33,000	71,000	22,700	126,700
1991-95 Average	DOMESTIC	2,800	41,400	12,700	56,800
	IMPORTED	22,800	20,700	7,700	51,200
	TOTAL	25,600	62,100	20,400	108,000

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

Table 5. U.S. cannery receipts (st) of domestic and imported tuna by species for the fourth quarters of 1995, 1996 and the recent (1991-95) fourth quarter averages. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Oct-Dec	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
		TOTAL CANNERY RECEIPTS (ALL LOCATIONS)			
1995	DOMESTIC	4,700	37,200	15,400	57,200
	IMPORTED	24,900	16,400	5,800	47,200
	TOTAL	29,600	53,600	21,200	104,400
1996	DOMESTIC	8,500	28,400	10,500	47,400
	IMPORTED	23,600	17,500	12,900	54,000
	TOTAL	32,100	46,000	23,400	101,400
1991-95 Average	DOMESTIC	3,300	37,900	10,300	51,500
	IMPORTED	24,800	21,500	9,200	55,500
	TOTAL	28,100	59,400	19,500	107,000

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

For all four quarters of 1996, domestic deliveries to U.S. canners decreased by 7% from the previous year, while imported deliveries increased by 5% (Table 6). Imports accounted for 54% of the tuna delivered to U.S. canners.

Albacore was the leading import for the third quarter of 1996 at 25,300 st, followed by skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna at 23,500 st and 11,200 st, respectively (Table 7). The leading supplier was Taiwan, with 51% of the import market, followed by South Korea and Ecuador, each with about 6% of the market. For the fourth quarter, albacore, again, was the leading import at 23,600 st, followed by skipjack tuna and yellowfin tuna at 17,500 st and 12,900 st, respectively (Table 8). The leading supplier during the fourth quarter was Taiwan, with 36% of the import market, followed by Ecuador and Spain, with 9% and 8% of the market, respectively.

The western Pacific Ocean was the source of 70% of the tuna received by U.S. canners during the third quarter of 1996 and 49% of the tuna received during the fourth quarter (Tables 9 and 10). The next greatest source was the eastern Pacific Ocean which accounted for 18% of the tuna received by U.S. canners during the third quarter and 21% during the fourth quarter.

Table 6. U.S. cannery receipts (st) of domestic and imported tuna by species for 1995, 1996 and the recent (1991-95) averages. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Jan-Dec	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
		TOTAL CANNERY RECEIPTS (ALL LOCATIONS)			
1995	DOMESTIC	11,100	148,100	44,300	203,500
	IMPORTED	95,000	94,800	26,600	216,500
	TOTAL	106,200	242,900	71,000	420,000
1996	DOMESTIC	18,400	129,700	42,000	190,100
	IMPORTED	95,100	86,800	44,400	226,300
	TOTAL	113,500	216,500	86,400	416,400
1991-95 Average	DOMESTIC	8,700	147,000	46,000	201,700
	IMPORTED	91,500	86,300	40,300	218,100
	TOTAL	100,200	233,300	86,300	419,800

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

Table 7. U.S. cannery imports (st) of tuna by species and source (flag of catcher vessel) for the third quarter of 1996. Totals for the third quarter of 1995 are given for comparison. Note that the flag of the catcher vessel does not necessarily reflect the country of export or point of shipment. Totals may not add due to rounding.

VESSEL FLAG	1996				1995
	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL	TOTAL
BELIZE	200	400	500	1,100	1,700
ECUADOR	0	1,800	1,800	3,600	2,600
FSM	0	1,800	100	1,900	600
FIJI	400	*	100	500	0
GHANA	0	500	400	1,000	1,400
HONDURAS	900	0	0	900	100
JAPAN	2,500	0	0	2,500	1,700
MEXICO	0	500	1,900	2,500	5,600
NAMIBIA	700	0	0	700	0
PANAMA	600	200	200	1,000	1,000
PHILIPPINES	0	700	300	1,000	0
SOLOMONS	300	400	0	700	2,700
SOUTH KOREA	300	3,200	300	3,800	4,100
SPAIN	*	*	2,000	2,000	2,500
TAIWAN	17,800	11,300	1,700	30,800	22,000
USA	*	400	500	900	2,400
VANUATU	0	1,300	900	2,200	700
OTHER	1,600	900	600	3,100	8,800
TOTAL	25,300	23,500	11,200	60,000	57,700

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.
[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

U.S. TUNA FISHERIES UPDATE

EASTERN PACIFIC TROPICAL TUNA FISHERY

During the period January through March 1997, seven U.S. tuna purse seiners participated in the eastern tropical Pacific tuna fishery and caught an estimated 3,000 mt of yellowfin tuna, 3,000 mt of skipjack tuna and 1,100 mt of bigeye tuna (Figure 1). The yellowfin tuna catch was up 58%, the skipjack tuna catch was up 15% and the bigeye

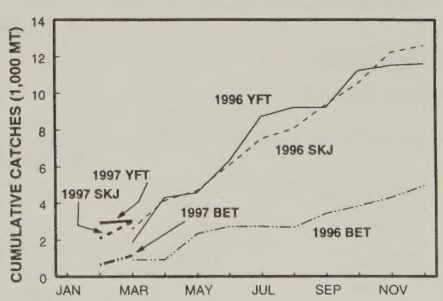

Figure 1. Cumulative tuna catches, by month, for the U.S. eastern tropical Pacific purse seine fishery, 1996 and 1997. Note that data are not available for the first two months of 1996 and the first month of 1997.

Table 8. U.S. cannery imports (st) of tuna by species and source (flag of catcher vessel) for the fourth quarter of 1996. Totals for the fourth quarter of 1995 are given for comparison. Note that the flag of the catcher vessel does not necessarily reflect the country of export or point of shipment. Totals may not add due to rounding.

VESSEL FLAG	1996				1995
	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL	TOTAL
BELIZE	*	200	700	900	900
ECUADOR	100	2,300	2,500	4,900	3,200
FSM	0	800	100	900	300
FRANCE	200	1,100	1,900	3,200	200
GHANA	0	1,400	1,000	2,400	2,000
JAPAN	1,900	0	0	1,900	3,500
MEXICO	0	800	0	800	1,600
PANAMA	1,400	0	*	1,400	100
PHILIPPINES	0	800	500	1,300	0
PORTUGAL	800	0	0	800	2,300
SIERRA LEONE	0	700	700	1,400	300
SOUTH AFRICA	500	0	0	500	400
SOUTH KOREA	700	1,300	100	2,100	2,500
SPAIN	*	2,400	2,100	4,500	0
TAIWAN	16,100	3,200	300	19,700	25,000
USA	*	700	1,300	2,000	1,900
VANUATU	0	300	400	700	1,600
VENEZUELA	0	1,100	900	2,000	0
WESTERN SAMOA	800	*	*	800	100
OTHER	1,100	500	300	2,000	1,400
TOTAL	23,600	17,500	12,900	54,000	47,200

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.
[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

Table 9. Receipts (st) of tuna by U.S. canneries by species and area of capture for the third quarters of 1995 and 1996. Totals may not add due to rounding.

SOURCE	Albacore		Skipjack		Yellowfin[1]	
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
E. ATLANTIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	5,800	4,000	1,400	1,200	300	600
TOTAL	5,800	4,000	1,400	1,200	300	600
W. ATLANTIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	*	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	2,600	4,700	*	*	*	*
TOTAL	2,700	4,700	*	*	*	*
E. PACIFIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	*	5,800	2,200	2,200	3,500	5,500
IMPORTED	100	100	7,600	4,000	2,500	5,600
TOTAL	1,400	5,900	9,800	6,200	6,000	11,000
W. PACIFIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	2,600	1,900	26,600	45,400	8,700	5,900
IMPORTED	8,200	13,800	18,000	18,200	1,800	3,100
TOTAL	10,800	15,700	44,600	63,600	10,400	9,000
INDIAN OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	2,100	2,600	3,600	100	3,600	2,000
TOTAL	2,100	2,600	3,600	100	3,600	2,000

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.
[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

tuna catch was up 22% compared to the same period of 1996.

The surface fleets (purse seiners and baitboats) of all nations fishing in the eastern Pacific Ocean caught an estimated 75,100 mt of yellowfin tuna, 25,400 mt of skipjack tuna and 8,500 mt of bigeye tuna. The leading nation was Mexico with 36% of the total catch, followed by Venezuela with 17% and Ecuador with 16%. The U.S. fleet accounted for 7% of the tuna catch.

WESTERN PACIFIC TROPICAL TUNA FISHERY

For the period January through March 1997, U.S. tuna purse seiners fishing in the western tropical Pacific under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty landed an estimated 30,000 mt of skipjack tuna and a combined 8,400 mt of yellowfin and bigeye tuna (Figure 2). The skipjack tuna landings were up 43% while the combined yellowfin and bigeye tuna landings were down 10% from the 1996 landings for the same period. Thirty-one vessels landed tuna from 42 trips through March 1997 compared to 31 vessels and 35 trips in 1996. *(Report provided by Doug Prescott, NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, CA)*

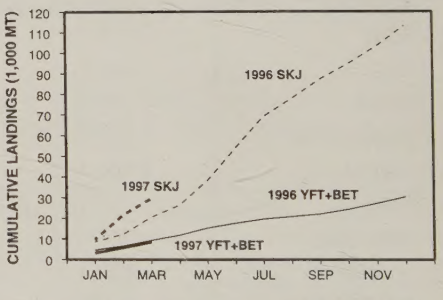

Figure 2. Cumulative tuna landings, by month, for the U.S. western tropical Pacific purse seine fishery, 1996 and 1997.

NORTHERN PACIFIC ALBACORE FISHERY

The 1996 U.S. North Pacific albacore troll season began in May north of Midway Island and ended in early November. Some vessels fished

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June 25, 1997

Dear Tuna Newsletter Recipient:

Issue 125 of the Tuna Newsletter, issued in May 1997, published an incorrect table of the proposed 1997 U.S. Atlantic bluefin tuna (ABT) quotas by category. Enclosed is the correct table for the proposed quota. Also, for your information, is a table of the final quota for the ABT fishery by fishing category, which was filed with the Office of the Federal Register on June 25, 1997. The final quotas by category are identical to those published in the proposed rule.

If you have any questions, please call the Highly Migratory Species Management Division in Gloucester, MA at (508) 281-9208.

Sincerely,

Mark Murray-Brown
Fishery Management Specialist,
Highly Migratory Species
Management Division

Enclosures

Proposed ABT Quotas by Fishing Category

	1992 Base Quota	1995 Base Quota[d]	Proposed 1997 Quota
GENERAL	**531**	**531**	**633**
HARPOON	**53**	**53**	**53**
INCIDENTAL	**113**	**110**	**110**
Other	4	1	1
Longline	109	109	109
North	23	23	23
South	86	86	86
PURSE SEINE	**301[a]**	**250**	**250**
ANGLING	**219**	222	**265**
School[b]	100	100	108
North	53	53	57
South	47	47	51
Large School/ Small Medium	119	119	151
North	-		80
South	-		71
Trophy[c]	-	3	6
North	-		2
South	-		4
RESERVE	**31**	**145**	**33**
TOTAL	**1248**	**1311**	**1344**

a. The 1992 base quota of 301 mt was reduced to 250 mt in 1995.
b. ICCAT recommendation limits school size class subquota to 8% of U.S. allocation.
c. Trophy quota category first established in 1995. In prior years, large medium and giant ABT landed by Angling and Charter/Headboat vessels were counted against Incidental-Other gear category.
D. Actual 1995 quotas included adjustments to base due to overharvest/underharvest from 1994.

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Final 1997 ABT Quotas by Fishing Category

	1992 Base Quota	1995 Base Quota[d]	1997 Quota
GENERAL	**531**	**531**	**633**
HARPOON	**53**	**53**	**53**
INCIDENTAL	**113**	**110**	**110**
Other	4	1	1
Longline	109	109	109
North	23	23	23
South	86	86	86
PURSE SEINE	**301[a]**	**250**	**250**
ANGLING	**219**	222	**265**
School[b]	100	100	108
North	53	53	57
South	47	47	51
Large School/ Small Medium	119	119	151
North	-		80
South	-		71
Trophy[c]	-	3	6
North	-		2
South	-		4
RESERVE	**31**	**145**	**33**
TOTAL	**1248**	**1311**	**1344**

a. The 1992 base quota of 301 mt was reduced to 250 mt in 1995.
b. ICCAT recommendation limits school size class subquota to 8% of U.S. allocation.
c. Trophy quota category first established in 1995. In prior years, large medium and giant ABT landed by Angling and Charter/Headboat vessels were counted against Incidental-Other gear category.
D. Actual 1995 quotas included adjustments to base due to overharvest/underharvest from 1994.

Table 11. Proposed 1997 U.S. Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas for 1997.

Category	1992 Base Quota	1995 Base Quota[4]	Proposed 1997 Quota
GENERAL	531	531	636
HARPOON	53	53	62
INCIDENTAL	113	110	110
Other	4	1	1
Longline	109	109	109
North	23	23	23
South	86	86	86
PURSE SEINE	301[1]	250	220
ANGLING	219	222	283
School[2]	100	100	108
North	53	53	57
South	47	47	51
Large School/Small Medium	119	119	169
North	-		90
South	-		79
Trophy[3]	-	3	6
North	-		2
South	-		4
RESERVE	31	145	33
TOTAL	1,248	1,311	1,344

[1]The 1992 base quota of 301 mt was reduced to 250 mt in 1995.

[2]ICCAT recommendation limits school size class subquota to 8% of U.S. allocation.

[3]Trophy quota category first established in 1995. In prior years, large medium and giant Atlantic bluefin tuna landed by Angling and Charter/Headboat vessels were counted against Incidental-Other gear category.

[4]Actual 1995 quotas included adjustments to base due to overharvest/underharvest from 1994.

eration of recreational anglers, commercial fishers and affiliated research agencies in tagging and releasing billfishes.

Although the focus of the Billfish Tagging Program is on tagging billfish, a variety of other species also have been tagged (Table 12). A total of 44,380 individual fish from 79 separate species have been tagged and released through this program since 1963. There have been 625 recoveries for an overall recovery rate of 1.41%. Billfish account for 90% of the releases and 75% of the recoveries. Striped marlin account for 44% of all fish tagged while sailfish account for 16%, blue marlin 10% and black marlin 8%. Of the billfish, swordfish and black marlin have the highest rates of return (2.36% and 2.07%, respectively).

TAG RECOVERIES IN 1996

In 1996 a total of 1,147 billfish were tagged and released by 758 anglers and 254 fishing captains. Increased tagging over the preceding year was noted for blue marlin off Hawaii, striped marlin off Southern California and sailfish off Mexico. However, there was a notable decrease in tagging of swordfish. Only 13 swordfish were tagged and released in 1996, compared to 73 in 1995 and 51 in 1994.

Eleven striped marlin, 5 blue marlin, 1 black marlin, 1 swordfish and 1 shortfin mako shark were recaptured in 1996. Ten of the 11 striped marlin recaptured during 1996 were tagged and recaptured in the waters surrounding Hawaii. Their time at liberty varied from 4 to 217 days. The other striped marlin was released off San Clemente Island, California, and recaptured near Santa Catalina Island only 30 nm away after being at liberty for 369 days. None of the striped marlin tag returns this year was for fish showing trans-Pacific movement, although such returns have been recorded in the past.

All five blue marlin tag returns were tagged in 1996 and released off Hawaii. Time at liberty for these blue marlin ranged from 16 to 1,503 days. The only swordfish recovery of the year had been tagged near the Maher Seamount, northeast of Hawaii, and recaptured 375 days later 394 nm to the west.

SUMMARY OF BILLFISH MOVEMENTS

Several conclusions can be drawn from the available tag-recapture data. Fish undergoing the capture and tagging stress appear to recover rapidly. For striped marlin 2.3% were recaptured by sportfishing gear within 2 days, some within hours, of tag and release. Others at liberty up to four years have shown no adverse effects of tagging and had gained considerable weight.

Billfish appear to undertake seasonal movement patterns, returning to the location where they were tagged. For example, the striped marlin tagged off San Clemente Island, California, was recaptured a year later only 30 nm away from the tagging location, and a sailfish at liberty four years was tagged and recaptured at the same location, East Cape off Baja California Sur, Mexico. Similarly, blue marlin recaptured at half-yearly intervals indicate movement away from the original tagging location, while yearly intervals show they return to approximately the same location where tagged.

The marlins and swordfish travel long distances and may have established, but as yet undefined, sea-

Table 10. Receipts (st) of tuna by U.S. canneries by species and area of capture for the fourth quarters of 1995 and 1996. Totals may not add due to rounding.

SOURCE	Albacore		Skipjack		Yellowfin[1]	
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
E. ATLANTIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	10,000	9,400	1,400	2,100	800	1,600
TOTAL	10,000	9,400	1,400	2,100	800	1,600
W. ATLANTIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	*	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	4,000	3,500	*	1,300	100	900
TOTAL	4,000	3,500	*	1,300	100	900
E. PACIFIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	4,300	8,200	5,200	2,000	2,300	1,500
IMPORTED	200	600	7,800	4,400	1,800	5,100
TOTAL	4,500	8,800	12,900	6,300	4,100	6,700
W. PACIFIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	300	300	32,000	26,400	13,100	9,000
IMPORTED	7,800	6,700	7,200	6,200	3,100	1,100
TOTAL	8,200	7,000	39,200	32,700	16,200	10,100
INDIAN OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	2,800	3,400	0	3,500	0	4,000
TOTAL	2,800	3,400	0	3,500	0	4,000

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

west of the international dateline early in the season. By July, fishing effort was concentrated near 43°N and 151°W. The catch per unit of effort (CPUE, expressed in numbers of fish caught per day of fishing) was high from July through October in this offshore area. Fishing along the U.S. West Coast improved compared to the 1995 season, but the excellent offshore catch rates drew many of the smaller coastal vessels to the offshore areas. Albacore catches off central and southern California increased in 1996 but remained well below historical levels.

Approximately 15,600 mt of albacore were landed by the U.S. troll fleet during the 1996 season, compared to 8,200 mt landed in 1995. The average CPUE for the 1996 season was 91 fish per day, compared to 48 fish per day in 1995. Transshipment vessels made five trips to the fishing grounds to transport the catch to canneries in American Samoa. There was increased competition from Canadian troll vessels in 1996 which participated in the fishery in greater numbers than in the previous year. U.S.-Canadian reciprocal agreements will allow Canadian vessels to sell their catches in more U.S. ports in future seasons.

One NMFS biologist accompanied a troll vessel to collect logbook data and information on length-frequency and net-damaged fish. Port samplers were also employed to collect data on landings. The average fork length of albacore sampled by port samplers and the NMFS biologist was 65 cm (5.6 kg). Average fork length of albacore sampled in 1995 was 69 cm (6.8 kg). *(Report provided by John Childers, NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, CA)*

SOUTHERN PACIFIC ALBACORE FISHERY

The 1996-97 U.S. South Pacific albacore fishery began in December 1996. Preliminary reports indicate that catches as of early April totaled approximately 1,630 mt. Landings for the 1995-96 season were 2,186 mt. Landings by the U.S. troll fleet since 1987 have averaged 2,312 mt per season. No length-frequency or logbook data are available yet from the 1996-97 South Pacific troll fishery. *(Report provided by John Childers, NMFS Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, CA)*

WESTERN ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA FISHERY

Proposed Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas for 1997 were published in the Federal Register on April 21, 1997. These quotas are summarized in Table 11. *(Report provided by Pat Scida, NMFS Northeast Region, Gloucester, MA)*

REPORTS

Editor's note: Original reports are published as a service to subscribers and may not represent the views of the NMFS. Readers should contact the authors of reports for details, if needed.

SOUTHWEST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER'S *BILLFISH TAGGING PROGRAM*

Dave Holts, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 271, La Jolla, California 92038-0271

The Southwest Fisheries Science Center's Pelagic Fisheries Resources Division conducts the *Billfish Tagging Program* to help determine migration, distribution and growth patterns of billfishes. This program, which began in 1963, encourages the participation and coop-

Table 12. Tag releases for 1996 and total tag releases and recaptures 1963-1996

Species Name	Releases (1996)	Releases (total)	Recoveries (Number)	Rate (%)
Striped Marlin	437	19,494	319	1.64
Sailfish	109	7,306	28	0.38
Blue Marlin-Pacific	438	4,401	38	0.86
Billfish-Unidentified	21	4,242	3	0.07
Black Marlin	49	3,331	69	2.07
Shortfin Mako Shark	2	1,080	24	2.22
Roosterfish	-	924	29	3.14
Short-Billed Spearfish	80	586	0	0.00
Yellowtail	-	491	36	7.33
Broadbill Swordfish	13	466	11	2.36
Dolphinfish (Mahi mahi)	-	405	2	0.49
Yellowfin Tuna	5	323	25	7.74
Blue Shark	-	297	5	1.68
Skipjack Tuna	-	96	2	2.08
Bat Ray	-	84	0	0.00
Albacore Tuna	20	79	0	0.00
Bigeye Tuna	2	76	2	2.63
Hammerhead Shark	-	52	2	3.85
White Sturgeon	-	50	1	2.00
Black Sea Bass	-	40	8	20.00
Leopard Shark	-	39	1	2.56
Bronze Whaler Shark	1	35	1	2.94
Wahoo	-	33	2	6.06
Whitetip Shark	-	33	0	0.00
Jack Cravelle	-	32	0	0.00
Thresher Shark	-	30	1	3.33
Barracuda	-	23	2	8.70
Bluefin Tuna	-	19	1	5.26
Tiger Shark	-	17	2	11.76
Striped Bass	-	11	0	0.00
White Marlin	-	10	1	10.00
Whale Shark	-	4	1	25.00
All Others	1	271	9	3.32
Total	1,179	44,380	625	1.41

sonal migratory patterns. These patterns include trans-oceanic and trans-equatorial crossings.

The results of the Center's billfish research are published annually in the *Billfish Newsletter.*

CENTER ORGANIZES SECOND INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC SWORDFISH SYMPOSIUM

Gerard DiNardo, Honolulu Laboratory, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, 2570 Dole Street, Honolulu, HI 96822-2396

Scientists of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center's Honolulu Laboratory organized the second International Pacific Swordfish Symposium, held in Kahuku, Hawaii, March 3-6, 1997. The event took place under the auspices of the Interim Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-Like Species in the North Pacific Ocean. The objective of the symposium was to provide a forum for the exchange of information on recent developments in biological, fisheries oceanography, and resource assessment research on swordfish in the Pacific Ocean, and to promote international scientific collaboration.

Two hundred symposium participants from seven countries heard thorough descriptions of swordfish fisheries presented by representatives from the United States, Japan, Mexico, Chile, Australia, and Reunion. A representative of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas presented a report on the Atlantic fishery, and an expert panel was convened to discuss stock assessment approaches and data needs. Three concurrent working group sessions focused on specific themes: biological input to stock assessment, fisheries oceanography and habitat, and resource assessment and monitoring. A report on the various sessions will be published in late 1997.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TUNA FISHERIES

Editor's note: The following news items, compiled from fishery trade and industry journals, newspapers and NMFS reports, are provided only as a service to our readers. The NMFS does not guarantee their accuracy.

UNITED STATES

Bluefin Tuna: On March 4, 1997, NMFS published proposed regula-

tions in the Federal Register for the Atlantic bluefin tuna fishery. The proposed regulations would prohibit fishing on certain days, require anglers to report catches in a timely manner, provide catch subquotas for northern and southern fisheries, provide for a new permit system with annual permit renewal and collection of fees, and prohibit spotter aircraft for all but the purse seine fishery. A series of four public hearings on the proposal were planned along the Atlantic Coast between March 18-27, with all comment due by March 31, 1997. (*Federal Register*)

Tuna and Consumers: On March 7, 1997, U.S. Food and Drug Administration officials warned that consumers sensitive to sulfites should temporarily avoid canned albacore (white meat) tuna, after the tuna industry reported on March 6 that, without its knowledge, sulfites had been added to a vegetable protein raw material used in canning tuna. Tuna industry officials announced that special labels would be immediately placed on canned tuna to provide warning, but that tuna will again be sulfite-free within a short time. On March 19, 1997, British doctors wrote in the Journal of Accident and Emergency Medicine that food poisoning (scombrotoxin poisoning) from tuna and related fish is more common than formerly believed because the condition is misdiagnosed. (*Reuters*)

Heinz Tuna Reorganization: In early March 1997, as part of a major corporate reorganization plan, H.J. Heinz Co. announced plans to scale back operations at or close as many as three of the company's tuna canneries. (*Associated Press*)

Van Camp Sale: On April 15, 1997, Van Camp Seafood Co. Inc. announced that it had entered into an agreement to sell its assets to Tri-Union Seafoods LLC, and that Van Camp had filed a voluntary petition under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court to facilitate the sale. Van Camp markets "Chicken of the Sea" brand seafood. (Van Camp Seafood press release via Dow Jones News)

Swordfish Limited Access: On March 3, 1997, NMFS published proposed regulations amending the Atlantic swordfish fishery management plan to establish a limited access program, with eligibility criteria based upon historical participation in the fishery. Limited entry permits would be transferable in restricted circumstances related to vessel replacement. A series of 12 public hearings was scheduled along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and in the Caribbean between March 21 and April 28, with April 28 being the deadline for public comment. (*Federal Register*)

Sharks: On March 12, 1997, the Center for Marine Conservation and TRAFFIC International released a study, "Managing Shark Fisheries: Opportunities for International Conservation," outlining a blueprint for action by international and national fishery managers to promote shark conservation. The study evaluates the potential for shark conservation under nine existing international regimes using the standards of the UN Agreement on Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. (CMC Press Release)

PACIFIC

Southern Hemisphere Bluefin Tuna: In late March 1997, Greenpeace announced the launching of a campaign to suspend fishing for southern hemisphere bluefin tuna, claiming the stock is only about 2% of its former abundance in the 1960s. Although a Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna sets annual catch quotas, non-member nations do not abide by the quotas. (*Reuters*)

Pacific Tuna Meeting: On March 13, 1997, the South Pacific's Forum Fisheries Agency announced that China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, U.S. and other tuna fishing nations had been invited to a June 10-13, 1997, conference at Majuro, Marshall Islands, to discuss management of south-central Pacific tuna stocks. The Agency is concerned with better regulation and

UPCOMING TUNA MEETINGS

(Organizer; meeting type: sci=science, adm=administration)

- MAY 19-22. 48th International Tuna Conference. Lake Arrowhead, CA. (IATTC; sci)
- MAY 23-24. IATTC/NRIFSR Bluefin Tuna Meeting. La Jolla, CA. (IATTC;sci)
- JUN 3-5. Annual Meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. San Jose, Costa Rica. (IATTC; adm)
- JUN 10-13. 2nd High-Level Multilateral Fisheries Conference. Majuro, Marshall Islands. (FFA; adm)
- JUN 16-18. 10th Meeting of the Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish (SCTB). Nadi, Fiji. (SPC; sci)
- JUN 18-20. 7th Meeting of the Western Pacific Yellowfin Research Group Meeting. Nadi, Fiji. (WPYRG; sci)
- AUG 25-29. American Fisheries Society Meeting. Monterey, CA. (AFS; sci)
- OCT 25-27. 5th World Tuna Trade Conference. Bangkok, Thailand. (INFOFISH)
- DEC 3-5. 15th Northern Pacific Albacore Workshop. Nanaimo, BC, Canada. (Canadian Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans; sci)

control of overharvesting in international waters and is seeking ways to increase the revenue for island nations from foreign tuna harvesters. (*Associated Press*)

New PNG Cannery: RD Fishing of the Philippines is in the process of setting up a tuna cannery in Madang, Papua New Guinea. This totally-foreign investment project will have an output capacity of 100 mt/day. Production is expected to begin by the middle of this year. The supply of raw material will come from Papua New Guinea's EEZ. (INFOFISH *Trade News*, February 17, 1997)

ATLANTIC

UK Tuna Consumption: *Food News* reports that tuna accounted for more than half the 92,000 mt of canned fish sold in the United Kingdom in 1994. The total value of the UK market for canned fish is some $207 million per year. In 1995 canned tuna sales (mainly skipjack) rose by 9% to 47,400 mt, compared to 43,500 mt in the previous year. Accordingly, imports of the product have grown from 8.58 million cartons in 1994 to 9.77 million in 1995. Sales for 1996 continued the upward trend of previous years. In terms of product type, solid pack in oil is losing in popularity to the less expensive chunks and flakes in brine. (INFOFISH *Trade News*, February 17, 1997)

French Catch Drops: The French tropical tuna fleet is made up of 33 vessels which fish in the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Catches in 1996 were 138,016 mt, a drop of 6.8% compared to 1995. Catches in the Atlantic Ocean in 1995 amounted to 58,200 mt (up 1,000 mt) and in the Indian Ocean, 9,700 mt (down 11,000 mt in 1996). (INFOFISH *Trade News*, March 3, 1997)

INDIAN OCEAN

New Tuna Plant for Oman: A new $7.9 million tuna processing and canning factory is being set up to start production later this year in Oman. Financed by both Omani and Saudi investors, the Omani-Saudi Food Canning Factory will produce around 900,000 cans of tuna a year for marketing in Europe, Japan, U.S., Gulf States and Asian countries. (INFOFISH *Trade News*, March 17, 1997)

IOTC: The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) based in the Seychelles was formed recently to protect important tuna and tuna-like species. These species represent the Indian Ocean's most important fisheries resource, providing protein for coastal communities and generating revenue. Tremendous advances in fishing technology, coupled with a mounting value of catches in both domestic and export markets, have created heavy pressure on these stocks. Experts underline the need for additional research to evaluate stock structures and the impact of the environment on them. The IOTC was created to do just that. It will have a permanent scientific committee to carry out research on better conservation and management of species such as albacore, bigeye tuna, skipjack, southern bluefin and yellowfin tunas, broadbill swordfish and billfish, among others.

The new Commission--the offspring of a series of inter-regional programs and projects--will be independent and count on its own budget, to be set at its next session. Its Scientific Committee will assess the status of stocks and formulate recommendations on conservation, fisheries management and research. As responsible fisheries call for initiatives which will protect the resources and their environment, "better information for improved exploitation" may well become the slogan for the newly-created Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Membership is already 14-nation strong and open to all coastal states of the Indian Ocean, as well as those which fish tunas and tuna-like species provided that they are members of FAO, the UN or its specialized agencies. (*Fishing News International*, March 1997)

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